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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001224

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2015

TAGS: KDEM PGOV CG

SUBJECT: UDPS LEADER STILL PLAYING THE SPOILER

REF: KINSHASA 1202

Classified By: A/DCM MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (C) Summary: UDPS leader Etienne Tshisekedi continues to miss opportunities to play a constructive role in the electoral process now underway in the DRC. Most recently, after demanding -- and receiving -- a one-week extension of voter registration in Kinshasa to ensure that UDPS members would have time to register to vote (after having been instructed not to do so during the regular enrollment period by Tshisekedi himself) as a condition for his enrolling or announcing his intention to do so, the sphinx has not spoken.

Kinshasa registration will end definitively July 31, although if Tshisekedi so desired he still could register in Mbuji Mayi. Doing so would be considerably less politically advantageous, however, and would reinforce the UDPS' image as a regional, rather than national, party. Tshisekedi increasingly risks becoming a spent political force if he maintains his rigid ways. End Summary.

My Way Or I Won't Play

¶2. (C) Although some elements of the UDPS senior party leadership -- notably Secretary General Remy Masamba -- continue to search for ways to move the UDPS into the electoral process following its failure to forcibly terminate the transition on June 30, party leader Etienne Tshisekedi refuses to play ball, instead continuing to insist that the transition is over and there will be no "valid" government in the DRC until he is installed as Prime Minister. His rigid insistence on having his own way seems to be increasingly alienating him (quietly) from the majority of the party's members, and could imperil its ability to take part in national elections next year.

¶3. (C) For instance, on July 26, as voter registration was about to end in Kinshasa, UDPS people began a frantic series of phone consultations with Western Embassies and the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) to see if it would be possible to extend the enrollment period for at least a week, to facilitate registration of UDPS members who had been forbidden by Tshisekedi to register during the normal process. (Note: When contacted we told the UDPS that this was not a decision for the US to make, and that only the President of the CEI could authorize such an extension. Abbe Malu Malu, head of the CEI, did extend registration to July 31 (ref). End Note.) We were told that if the extension were authorized, Tshisekedi would announce that his members should register, and also would register himself, or at least announce his intention to do so. This did not happen. Instead, word was quietly passed by senior UDPS leaders to the Kinshasa-based membership that they should register if they had not already done so. Tshisekedi himself, however, has so far neither spoken nor registered, although of course he has a few days left in which he could do so.

Comment

¶4. (C) Tshisekedi seems determined to continue to play the role of electoral spoiler, regardless of how that decision impacts his party or his followers, many of whom seem already to have quietly registered, and certainly are doing so in Kisangani and other areas of Province Oriental and Bas-Congo, where registration is now underway. Registration centers in Kinshasa are now mostly empty, with only about 14,000 people processed July 26 (vice the normal daily total of around 150,000 during the scheduled registration period). Despite conciliatory noises by party moderates, the UDPS' authoritarian structure means that in the end, Tshisekedi's mono-mania is the party's final official word. Although some Kinshasa newspapers questioned rhetorically whether elections are possible if the UDPS does not take part, we believe that it is only Tshisekedi himself who will be the loser if he fails to demonstrate quickly the necessary flexibility and willingness to take part in the process. There is good reason to believe that the majority of the party members are quietly opting for elections, even if that will mean that their party leader will not be taking part. Overall, Tshisekedi's choices are increasingly marginalizing him and,

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if he continues on this course, he risks dividing his party and becoming a spent political force, at least outside of his

core constituency area in the Kasai provinces.
MEECE